



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Contact: Debbie Anderson (360) 902-2043
Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Decision denies hop growers proposal on new assessment, reduced acreage plan

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture has turned down a proposal to amend the state's hop marketing order to implement a set-aside program. Hop producers are receiving information from the department this week explaining the May 30 decision not to hold a referendum on the proposal. This goes against a tentative decision WSDA announced earlier in May that recommended a referendum to establish a special assessment that would raise \$2 million to pay growers to remove up to 25 percent of the hop acreage from production this year.

Bill Brookreson, acting director at the time of the decision, found that the hop industry was divided over the proposal. In reviewing comments from an April hearing and comments received after his initial decision, Brookreson saw a failure to include key definitions essential to managing the new marketing order and predicted there would be questions on how to deal with hops harvested in 2001 and placed in storage. Some issues related to hop acreage that could result in disputes between a landlord and tenant and the fact that some growers have already contracted for 2002 crop year prices. There also was a concern that some growers who may have set aside acreage might plant another hop variety or establish new hop acreage.

In considering the testimony and findings, Brookreson concluded that the proposal would not serve its intended purpose to provide the hop industry a means to set-aside or remove existing hop acreage from production. He also concluded the proposal would not serve policies in the law that established the hop marketing order.

The goal of the grower proposal was to bring hop supplies into alignment with lower demand in an oversupplied world market.

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Editor's Note: For a copy of the department's decision regarding amending the hop marketing order, see the Web site at www.wa.gov/agr/communications/2002/attachments/HopFinalDecision05302002.pdf.